

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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INS/CO FOR CODEP (COEXM)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, VM, TH
SUBJ: SITUATION IN THE SONGKHLA REFUGEE CAMP

THIS MSG SENT FROM SONGKHLA ACTION ON 07 APR 78 H/W REPEAT IT
TO YOUR POSTS

QUOTE

1. AS OF APRIL 1 THERE WERE 827 REFUGEES IN THE SONGKHLA CAMP.
THIS IS 135 MORE THAN ON JANUARY 1, BUT 87 LESS THAN THE 914 PERSONS
IN CAMP ON MARCH 1. THIS TOTAL WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHER., HOWEVER, HAD
NOT 84 REFUGEES LEFT THE CAMP SURREPTICIOUSLY TO SAIL TO AUSTRALIA.
THE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS IN MARCH WAS HALF THAT OF FEBRUARY WHILE THE
DEPARTURES NEARLY DOUBLED. EVEN WITHOUT THE 84 MENTIONED ABOVE THERE
WERE ABOUT 20 MORE DEPARTURES THAN IN FEBRUARY. THE NUMBER OF
COUNTRIES ACCEPTING REFUGEES INCREASED FROM THREE TO FIVE. THE
NUMBER GOING TO THE U.S. CONTINUED TO DROP. IN MARCH THE U.S. ACCEP-
TED 59 REFUGEES AGAINST 205 IN JANUARY AND 117 IN FEBRUARY.

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2. THE ONLY CRISIS WITHIN THE LAST TWO MONTHS INVOLVED THE 84
REFUGEES WHO SAILED FOR AUSTRALIA ON MARCH 9 AND 12 IN THREE STOLEN
BOATS. 85 PER CENT OF THEM WERE MEN, ALMOST ALL UNDER THE AGE OF 25.
ANOTHER 75 IN THE CAMP SAID THEY WERE READY TO ATTEMPT TO SAIL TO
AUSTRALIA IN BOATS WHICH THE DISTRICT CHIEF OFFERED TO PROVIDE.
THIS OFFER WAS RESCINDED AFTER THE UNHCR INTERVENED.

3. REASONS FOR ATTEMPTING TO SAIL TO AUSTRALIA VARIED. TEN OF THE REFUGEES WERE TIRED OF WAITING. THEY HAD BEEN IN THE CAMP FOR MORE THAN NINE MONTHS. OVER 90 PERCENT OF THE REMAINING DEPARTEES HAD BEEN IN THE CAMP FOR LESS THAN THREE MONTHS, A FEW LESS THAN A MONTH. HOWEVER, THE SINGLE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WKNEW THAT THE U.S. VOLAGS WERE HAVING PROBLEMS FINDING SPONSORS FOR THEM. OTHERS APPARENTLY FELT LIFE IN THE CAMP INTOLERABLE. SOME CLAIMED THAT THE LACK OF MONEY, IN PARTICULAR, MADE LIFE UNBEARABLE. THE MORE RECENT ARRIVALS HAVE, IN GENERAL, SHOWN THEMSELVES MUCH MORE IMPATIENT AND INTOLERANT OF CAMP CONDITIONS THAT THOSE WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN CAMP WEAK CAMP LEADERSHIP CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROBLEM.

4. LIFE IN CAMP HAS RETURNED TO A MORE EVEN KEEL SINCE THEN. THE DEPARTURE OF 273 REFUGEES, THE VISIT OF THE UNHCR LEGAL OFFICER, NEWS THAT THE AUSTRALIA TEAM WOULD VISIT THE CAMPS TWICE A MONTH. AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE NEW U.S. PROGRAM HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF CAMP MORAL.

5. STATISTICS FOR FEBURARY AND MARCH:

A. REFUGEES IN CAMP AS OF FEBRUARY 1....709

ARRIVALS.....352

DEPARTURES..... 147

OF THE 147 DEPARTURES, 117 WERE DESTINED FOR THE U.S., 25 TO FRANCE AND 5 TO CANADA.

B. REFUGEES IN CAMP AS OF MARCH 1.....914

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ARRIVALS.....186

DEPARTURES.....273

OF THE 273 DEPARTURES 166 WERE DESTINED FOR AUSTRALIA (INCLUDING THE 84 THAT SNUCK OUT OF THE CAMP), 59 TO THE U.S. ,25 TO FRANCE, 9 TO CANADA, 7 TO WEST GERMANY AND 7 TO MALAYSIA. THE LATTER 7 WERE MUSLIMS WHO ARRIVED IN SONGKHLA ON MARCH 23 AND DECIDED TO LEAVE FOR MALAYSIA ON MARCH 24 BECAUSE THEY FELT THEY WOULD RECEIVE A WARMER WELCOME THERE.

6. COMMENT: I DO NOT KNOW WHY THE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS DECREASED SHARPLY IN MARCH. ONE REASON MAY BE RTG ACTIONS IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1977, WHICH SIGNALLED TO THE VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM THAT THEY WERE NOT WELCOME IN THAILAND. HAYASHIDA

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